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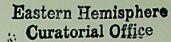
THE RONALD AND MAXINE LINDE FOUNDATION

Dr. John L. Sommer and Dr. Donna M. Sommer

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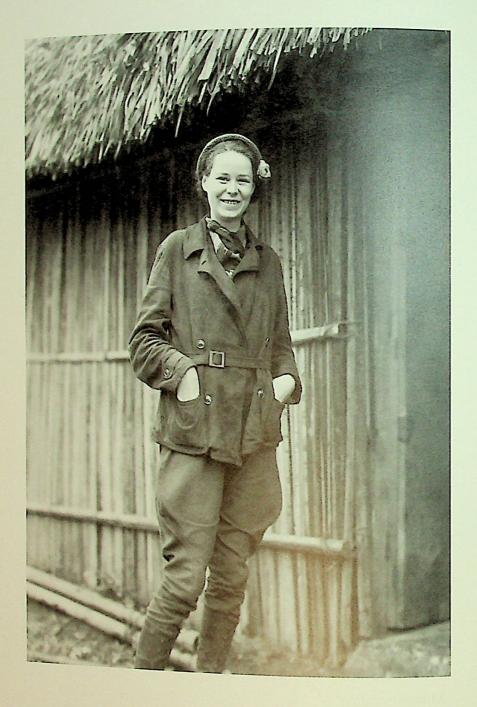
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Marion Stirling in 1939 at the camp of Tres Zapotes, Veracruz where the Stirlings found the first of the great Olmec heads. Photo by Richard Hewitt Stewart.

Marion Stirling Pugh (1911-2001)

The Textile Museum has lost a Trustee who shaped the direction of the Museum for over thirty years and who was the last direct link to the Museum's founder, George Hewitt Myers. Profoundly interested in the art and history of weaving, Marion Pugh was a Trustee of The Textile Museum from 1968, serving as Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President, and President.

Marion was just shy of her 90th birthday when she died in Tucson after an extraordinarily productive life that saw continuing accomplishment in a variety of scholarly disciplines ranging from archaeology to geography.

She was born Marion Illig on May 12, 1911, in Middletown, New York, the daughter of Louis and Lena Randall Illig. In 1930, Marion received her BS degree from Rider College, and afterward moved to Washington, DC, where she attended George Washington University from 1931 to 1933. During this time Marion also worked at the Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of American Ethnology as secretary to Matthew W. Stirling, Director of the Bureau. On December 11, 1933, Marion and Matthew were married.

Together the Stirlings shared a career of archaeological adventure and discovery, beginning with a series of joint National Geographic Society-Smithsonian Institution expeditions to explore the little-known ruins of Mexico's Gulf Coast regions between 1938 and 1946. These journeys by Marion, Matthew, and National Geographic photographer Richard Hewitt Stewart took place mainly by boat and horseback through the humid rain forests of Veracruz and Tabasco states. Despite the physical difficulties, the expeditions proved successful beyond all expectations, for they revealed and recorded a truly lost civilization—the Olmec, producers of the famed colossal heads of stone and other remains, dated to around the beginning of the first millennium B.C., that proved it to be one of the earliest high cultures in all of the Americas.

From the Mexican work the Stirlings and Stewart moved on to other areas of the hemisphere, including Ecuador, Panama, and Costa Rica. The results of these expeditions appeared regularly as articles by Marion, Matthew, or both in the *National Geographic Magazine*, *Américas*, and other journals. In 1941, Marion shared with Matthew the prestigious Franklin L. Burr Award of the National Geographic Society.

Marion's ever-broadening interests are reflected in her memberships in the Association of American Geographers and the Society of Woman Geographers, where she served on the Executive Council in 1954, and as President, 1960-63 and 1969-72.

Matthew Stirling died in 1975. One of Marion's prized possessions was a silver pendant that Matthew had made for her in Mexico, embossed with a jaguar mask on the obverse and the date of a stele whose date she decoded on the reverse.

In 1979 Marion married Major General John Ramsey Pugh, the son-in-law of George Hewitt Myers, who was active himself in the work of The Textile Museum. Together they made their home at Little Fiddlers Green, General Pugh's family estate in Round Hill, Virginia. They updated this stone house dating from 1770 to pursue their interests, building a library for their books and memorabilia, and a lap swimming pool.

Marion's interest in Mexican textiles led her to establish the Mexican Research Fund at The Textile Museum for the purchase of textiles for the collection. She both contributed to this fund and also asked that gifts in expression of sympathy on the death of Matthew Stirling be made to it. In 1979, General and Mrs. Pugh broadened the scope of the fund and it was accordingly renamed the Latin American Research Fund. Marion endowed this fund in December 1993. The fund has been the Museum's only source of purchase funds for textiles in this area, making possible many significant additions to the collections from Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia as well as Mexico. Purchases have been made of material collected in the field in the course of textile research in each of these countries and outstanding examples offered by dealers. Marion also supported other Western Hemisphere Department projects such as fieldwork by curator Ann Rowe in Ecuador, and a forthcoming publication on O'ero textiles from the Cuzco area of Peru.

Art and adventure were Marion's pursuits. We do well to follow in her footsteps.

Ursula E. McCracken Director, The Textile Museum

George E. Stuart Center for Maya Research

Fig. 1. Map of Burma. Chin State stretches from the Indian border of Manipur in the north and Mizoram to the west, and from the Bangladesh, Chittagong Hill Tracts border in the southwest to the junction of Magwe Division and Arakan (Rakhine) State in the south. The Sagaing and Magwe Divisions comprise the eastern border. The Chin/Zo groups can be found in all the surrounding areas, from as far north as the Naga Hills in India to as far south as Paukkaung, which is east of the city of Prome.



Notes from the Field: On the Trail of Khumi, Khami, and Mro Textiles

Deborah Lindsay Garner and Jay Bommer

In recent years, various intricately woven textiles have surfaced on the Southeast Asian art markets of Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Mae Sai/Thachilek. Visually dynamic and technically superb, these "mystery" weavings appeared without provenance or accompanying documentation. When asked, the more knowledgeable Thai dealers could only shrug their shoulders and answer with a simple "Burma;" some offered "Chin" as a possibility.

The dimensions of the objects and their structure led us, and most scholars we consulted, to conclude that they were garments. The elaborate embellishments of silk single-faced, supplementary-weft patterning, complex beading, and cowrie-shell decoration testified to the many hours that must have been needed to produce them. Surely these garments were intended to be worn at important junctures in the owner's life. Similarities in design motifs and technique led to speculation that they may have been produced by the same group.¹

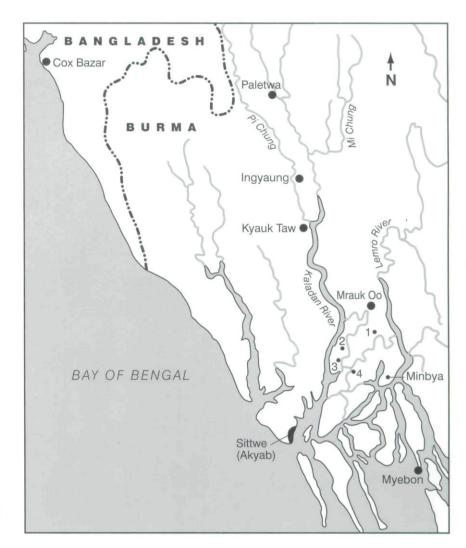
As dealers and collectors of textiles and traditional costume, we had been in Burma collecting in the field for years and had not come across the talented weavers who produced these intriguing textiles. Nor could any of our Chin/Zo² friends (who are mostly central and northern Chin/Zo) identify the examples we brought along, although each of them, male and female, expressed appreciation of the quality of the workmanship displayed.

In the United States, research in British colonial publications and more modern anthropological studies, followed up with many interviews via telephone, letters, and e-mail with Chin/Zo contacts here and abroad, turned our attention to southern Chin State in Burma.

Our speculation is that these textiles were produced by the Khumi, Khami, and Mro.³

These groups live in villages in the lush, tropical environs of the Kaladan River valley and the surrounding hills in northern Arakan State and southwestern Chin State in Burma (figs. 1, 2). The focus of this article is on the weavings that comprise the traditional costumes of the Khumi, Khami, and Mro and, to a lesser extent, those of the Laytu and Zantu people, all of whom are members of the larger Chin/Zo ethnic group.

Fig. 2. Kaladan River valley and vicinity. 1. Pan Be Dan village, 2. Maung Hna Ma village, 3. Laung Shi Chaung village, 4. Agi Daw Ma village.



The Khumi

The Khumi are mostly hill people who inhabit settlements along streams and rivers in the vicinity of the Kaladan River and its tributaries (Mi Chaung, Pi Chaung, Sami Chaung) north, northeast, and northwest of the town of Kyauk Taw, with a major concentration in the Paletwa area.⁵

Khumi dress

The Khumi women still wear traditional dress for festival days. Besides their richly woven skirts, elaborately edged with multicolored beads, they wear a breastcloth, a small scarf of black or darkly colored cotton measuring about 10-13 cm in width.6 The Khumi name for this garment is ne kouk7 (figs. 3, 4), it is worn across the back of the neck and draped across the breasts. At the bottom on both ends are usually several rows of fine weaving consisting of simple geometric designs. Further embellishment is provided by rows of tiny glass beads that are sometimes capped with halves of small brown seeds. The edges of the ne kouk are literally studded with clusters of beads. Occasionally, brightly colored tufts of acrylic or cotton fibers are also added. In traditional dress this would be the only upper-body covering, but nowadays a woman usually wears the ne kouk over a blouse purchased in the market.

Women also wear a short, tubular skirt called *nay na*, which falls just above the knee (figs. 5, 6). These skirts display tightly controlled single-faced weaving with elegant geometric patterns. The top and bottom edges are ornamented with rows of beaded fringes. This skirt is secured by a metal or glass beaded belt that is tied in front and sometimes draped gradually down in the back to behind the knee.

On her head, a woman is adorned with a plain white fillet (*sa bong* or *sam bang*), commonly woven of cotton, occasionally of silk. Into this, she places a long, rectangular bamboo comb (*pahti*) that is positioned at the back of the head (fig. 7). The *pahti* is sometimes covered with copper for decoration and is then called *patoe*. The Khumi woman's outfit is completed by heavy metal bracelets (*kascee*) and large disk earrings (*dai roung*).

U Pri Kwin, a Khumi man, told us that men wear a long loincloth, *samtu nay na*, made of plain white cotton with a section of blue indigo, about 77 cm, richly patterned on both ends (figs. 8, 9). This is traditionally worn without any type of upper-body covering, but today it would be worn with a modern-style shirt and only on important ceremonial occasions. The man's head scarf is called *lu paung*.

Fig. 3. Khumi women wear a strip of woven cloth over their shoulders; called *ne kouk*, it drapes down the front, covering the breasts. 94 x 12.7 cm.

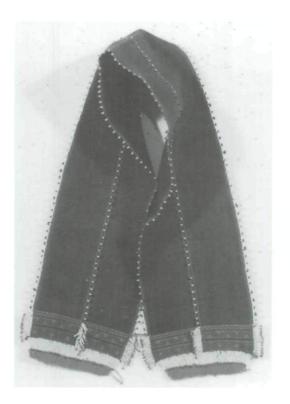




Fig. 4. Detail of Khumi ne kouk shown in figure 3.

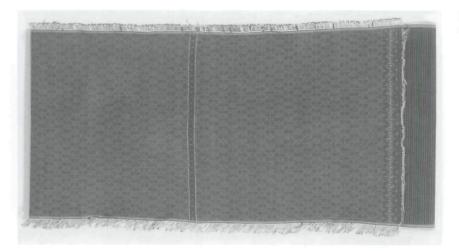


Fig. 5. Khumi woman's lower-body wrapper (nay na), 96.5 x 44.5 cm.



Fig. 6. Detail of Khumi nay na shown in figure 5.



Fig. 7. The photograph was taken about 1987 and is of Daw Ma Thaoo, a Khumi woman who lives in Paletwa. She is wearing the traditional *nay na*, or skirt as well as belts, earrings, and head scarf. Missing is the *ne kouk*; in its place is a blouse purchased in the marketplace.

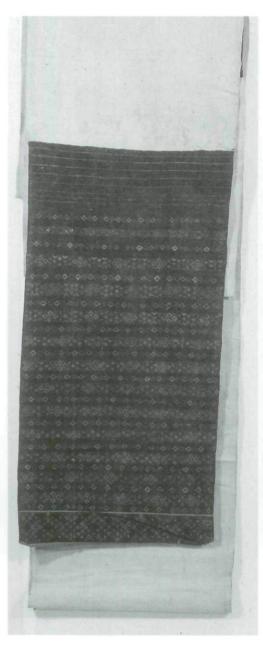


Fig. 8. Khumi man's loincloth (samtu nay na). This style of loincloth is shared by the people of the Paletwa, Matupi, and Haka areas, and possibly other Chin/Zo people as well. 589 x 43 cm.



Fig. 9. Detail of Khumi samtu nay na shown in figure 8.



Fig. 10. Mro- or Kyauk Taw-style breastcloth ($\it marankite$). 68.5 x 35.5 cm.

The Mro

The Khumi and the Mro seem to live in close proximity to each other. U Sar Khaung, a Mro man, told us of several Mro villages along the Mi Chaung, northwest of Kyauk Taw, that are inhabited by both Khumi and Mro. Current political restrictions on traveling outside of Mrauk Oo precluded a visit to these villages. Individuals interviewed agreed that the Mro and the Khumi have slightly different dialects and different dress styles for men and women, but apart from these, few differences exist between them.

We met with Mro weavers from the village of Ingyaung, which is situated on the Pi Chaung, a tributary of the Kaladan River. This village is about 12 miles north of Kyauk Taw. The Mro women interviewed said that women in their village continue to weave their traditional costume, which they wear for traditional celebrations and ritual observances such as the building of a new house, a wedding, the birth of a baby, and harvest time. All the Mro women we spoke with began to weave as young girls and learned the skill from their mothers. The Mro weavers continue to use a backstrap loom called po paung.

Mro dress

The Mro women's traditional dress is more similar to the outfit worn by the Khami than to that worn by the Khumi. They wear a breastcloth, but not in the style of the Khumi. Called a marankite (figs. 10, 11), it is a small textile that measures about 76 x 35 cm. Each woman makes her own, and dimensions vary according to the weaver's size. The marankite, passing under one arm, covers the front and back of a woman; two corners are tied together above the opposite shoulder, leaving one shoulder exposed. Sometimes it is tied again under the arm near the waist. This would be the only upper-body garment in traditional costume, but now the Mro women, like the Khumi, prefer to wear the marankite over a modern blouse. Complementing the marankite is a shoulder scarf, or naga pong; it is intricately patterned and edged with colorful glass beads and small metal bells (figs. 12, 13).

Instead of the short tubular garment worn by the Khumi, the Mro women wear a flat lower-body garment (wantalite), which wraps around the body and is secured by a belt. The belt (srkra baung) is composed of many strands of glass beads that tie in front. An older style of

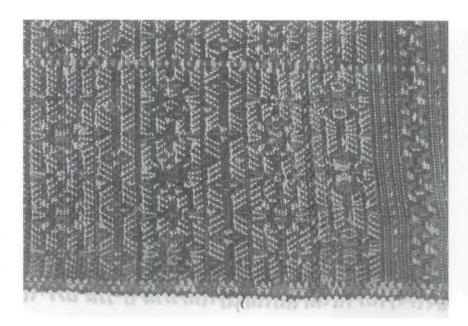


Fig. 11. Detail of Mro marankite shown in figure 10.

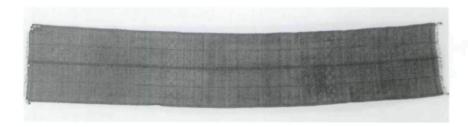


Fig. 12. Mro- or Kyauk Taw-style woman's shoulder scarf (naga pong). 185.5 x 38 cm.



Fig. 13. Detail of Mro naga pong shown in figure 12.



Fig. 14. Mro man's loincloth (daun). 10 x 325 cm.

lower-body wrapper has beads along the edges and is more like the Khumi-style skirt. The costume is further accessorized with strands of carnelian beads, white metal bracelets (*khit sei*), and cylindrical earplugs of white metal (*deroung*).

Traditional dress for Mro men would be a long loincloth, or *daun* (figs. 14, 15). The *daun* differs from the Khumi *samtu nay na* (figs. 8, 9). It is about 10 cm wide compared to the much wider Khumi piece. The men with whom we spoke, who ranged in age from 39 to 50, have never worn the traditional *daun*; they prefer the Burmese *lon-gyi*, a tubular lower-body wrapper. A white head scarf (*lu pong*) and earrings (*na haung*) also used to be worn. Like the loincloth, the earrings are rarely worn today.



Fig. 15. Detail of Mro daun shown in figure 14.

The Khami

The Khami live in a large area south of the Khumi and Mro. The area forms a roughly triangular shape that lies between the Kaladan and Lemro Rivers: with its apex at the town of Kyauk Taw, one side runs south down to Minbya, and the bottom stretches west to southwest as far as Sittwe. There are some Mro villages that lie along the Kaladan River within this triangle, but most of the population is Khami. 11 This area is a flat river valley of rice fields and numerous meandering creeks and streams. The Khami are primarily rice farmers and fishermen, traveling by small dugout and framed canoes to the many islands that surround their villages. The Khami villages we visited (Laung Shi Chaung, Maung Hna Ma, Agi Daw Ma, and Pan Be Dan) are located approximately 90 meters away from the edge of the Kaladan River's tributaries and are protected from tidal-surge flooding by earthen mounds or dikes that stand 1-1.5 meters in height. These mounds also serve as corrals for livestock, to enclose rice fields, and for elevated footpaths. In 1996 many fields, bridges, and homes were destroyed by floods that ravaged the whole area.

Inside a village, the grounds are very spacious: there are wide footpaths, many palm trees, and wood and bamboo houses that are built about 1.5 meters above ground level (fig. 16). On the first floor of the house is a large sitting platform used for entertaining guests. Upstairs, the house is sectioned into two or three rooms for sleeping and storage. The compound for each house comprises about 28 square meters of land enclosed by a bamboo fence. Here a family has its own vegetable garden for personal consumption: any excess is brought to the nearest market, in this case Mrauk Oo. Holding ponds for shrimp and fish, and household water for communal use are usually set back deep into the village. The religion of all the villages we visited was Buddhist; each has its own open-sided temple with one or more Buddha images and an adjacent monastery.

Khami ceremonial life and other customs

Traditional Khami (and Khumi) life was animistic and revolved around propitiating spirits to ensure successful crops. Sacrifices of fowl or pigs were performed at the time of sowing seed and again just before harvesting crops.

Ancestor spirits were honored in the old days with a ceremony known as Hplaw. The Khami ritual executed after the harvest was called Ta-proung pa oung, which means "opening of the dead house." Traditionally, small spirit houses were built outside a Khami village to house the ashes of deceased relatives. At Ta-proung pa oung, relatives of the deceased prepared food and rice liquor to be taken to spirit houses where the doors would be ritually opened and small amounts of food and drink would be offered to each spirit. Then the doors would be ritually closed, and the family members, openly weeping for their loved ones, would sit down to consume the remaining food and liquor. They would return to their homes in the village in the evening.12

The younger Khami women continue to dress for ceremony at least once a year. Ceremonies that require traditional dress are weddings, the building of new homes, the birth of babies, and Union Day (see below). It seems that as a woman gets older, she wears traditional dress less and

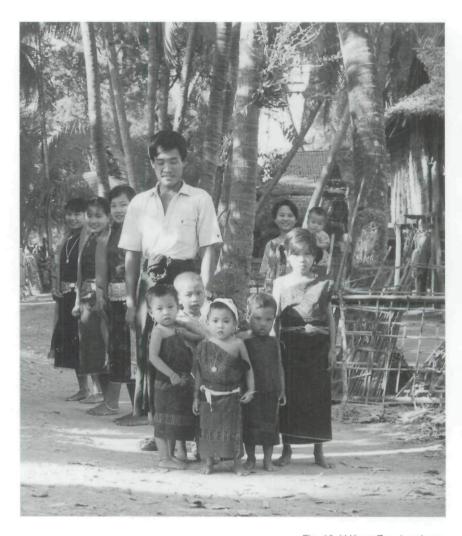


Fig. 16. U Kyaw Zan, headman of Maung Hna Ma village, with young Khami girls in full dress.



Fig. 17. Khami elders of Laung Shi Chaung village in full dress. The older Khami women wear a skirt, called *inok*, different from the type worn by younger women (see figure 22). Missing also is the *htip paum*, or shoulder scarf, reserved for young girls.



Fig. 18. A Khami weaver from Maung Hna Ma village weaving a *kane*, or large cotton blanket (see figure 19). She is using a typical backstrap loom (*tapaur*).

less often. Most of the women with whom we spoke were past the age of fifty and had not dressed traditionally for at least ten years. Some of these women have kept one set of traditional garments in their homes even though they had not dressed traditionally since before they were married (fig. 17). None of the older men interviewed had worn a loincloth for at least forty years, and most men interviewed had never worn one.

All the women had learned to weave from their mothers, and they in turn have taught their daughters. Many of the older weavers said that styles have not changed from those worn when they were young girls. Every woman weaves her own clothes on a backstrap loom, called tapaur or tapet by the Khami (fig. 18). The Khami also weave a large cotton blanket (kane), richly patterned with brightly colored warp stripes (fig. 19). Older people say that the younger girls weave less today than in the past. Expense and lack of availability of cotton may be contributing factors in decreased production of woven products. British records of 1879 show that the Khami villages on the Kaladan River grew large yields of cotton, which was much sought after by the Arkanese. The British Secretary of Commerce in Bombay, India, described the quality of the cotton as being "somewhat superior to ordinary Bengal cotton but inferior in staple, fiber and texture to Egyptian cotton."13 Native cotton is still

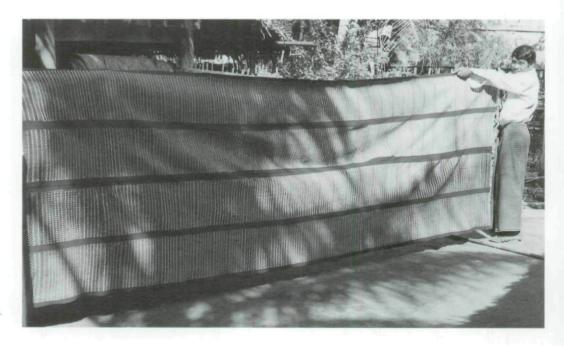


Fig. 19. Large cotton blanket (kane). Approximately 548.5 x 100 cm.

grown in the upper Lemro River valley and in the upper Kaladan River valley, starting just north of Kyauk Taw. But the extensive fields in the lower Kaladan region, recorded in British journals as cotton fields, now grow mostly rice.

In recent field interviews conducted in many small villages of Khami and other tribal affinities that inhabit tributaries of the Kaladan, women talked of the difficulty of obtaining cotton today. Some weavers told of vendors who used to come from Paletwa, many miles north, to sell them cotton in their villages. For unknown reasons these vendors no longer make the trip. Occasionally the small market in Mrauk Oo has cotton for sale, but it is quite expensive for weavers to purchase. The period of December to March is the traditional time for the sale of the cotton crop, but when we explored the market of Mrauk Oo in December 1997, no cotton was to be seen. Only vegetables and piles of cheap manufactured clothing, in styles inspired by the West, were offered for sale. If cotton is needed for a special weaving project, the only other available option is to travel north to the Mro or Khumi areas, namely Paletwa.

Khami dress

The upper-body garment for Khami women is a breastcloth, known as *ah khin* (fig. 20). It consists of a rectangle approximately 40 x 58 cm; elaborately patterned with multicolored yarns, it is sometimes edged with small glass beads and sequins (fig. 21). The Khami *ah khin* is distinctive from the comparable Mro garment in its two complicated supplementary warp stripes, called *ma laung sakitpat*. The weavers can produce an *ah khin* in one month if they work on it every day. Traditionally the *ah khin* is worn without any undergarment, but today a young girl wears it over a Western-style blouse (fig. 22). The women wear the *ah khin* breastcloth in the same manner as that described for the Mro.

Over the *ah khin* women wear a wide shoulder scarf, the *htip paum* (figs. 23, 24). Draped over the shoulders, it is worn down the front of the body in a shawl-like manner. The Khami *htip paum* has a brightly colored central design area, about 18 cm wide, with two warp-striped borders, also 18 cm wide, of plain-weave fabric. *Htip paum*, also used for carrying babies, are not worn by older women.

The Khami women's lower-body wrappers, called *taka seang*, are very similar to the Mro wrappers described above. The *taka seang* is a flat

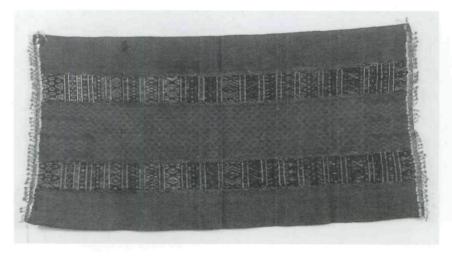


Fig. 20. Khami woman's upper-body covering or breastcloth (ah khin). These textiles join above one shoulder and wrap under the opposite arm. 67.5 x 35.5 cm.

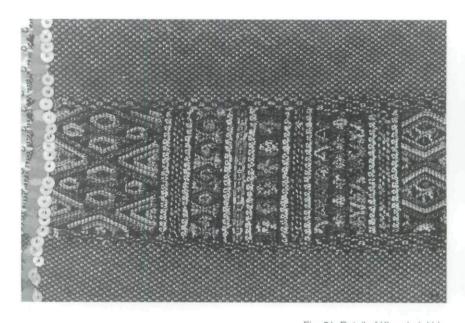


Fig. 21. Detail of Khami ah khin shown in figure 20.



Fig. 22. Young Khami couple of Laung Shi Chaung village. Traditional male dress does not include an upper-body garment with the loincloth.

textile that wraps around the body, falling just below the knee and held in place by a belt. There are two different styles of belts with which to anchor the taka seang: one, the kusa, is composed of many strands of beads; the second type, the sakruh, is made of heavy metal beads which can be very elaborate and are sometimes made of silver. The taka seang usually has a black or dark background and is regularly patterned with brightly colored designs; sometimes there are glass beads along the bottom edge (fig. 25). One taka seang pattern that is distinctive consists of a zigzag pattern called talung, which fills the entire face of the wrapper. The taka seang that we have seen with the talung pattern were all woven in silk. Silk (lacone) is very expensive—when it can be found. Older women do not wear taka seang. Instead, they have a more somber, finely striped garment in dark neutral tones, the inok (fig. 17).

Traditional dress for men is an intricately woven loincloth, averaging about 17 cm in width. Called *thanipa* and/or *patari* (figs. 26, 27), these loincloths range from approximately 457 to 550 cm in length. The same complex weaving techniques used in producing the *ah khin* also appear in the two decorative trailing ends of the man's loincloth. The remaining central body consists of a very subtle black-on-black patterning.



Fig. 23. Khami woman's shoulder cloth, called htip paum. Unlike its counterpart in the Mro and Khumi dress, the Khami htip paum has no beads or bells along the selvedge. 194.3 x 45.7 cm.

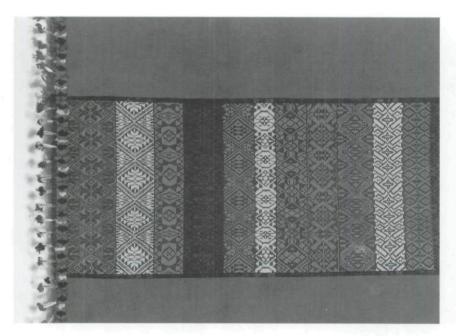


Fig. 24. Detail of Khami htip paum shown in figure 23.



Fig. 25. A group of Khami women from the Kyauk Taw area, a town where the Khami and Mro peoples overlap. The hats/headdresses are not a typical part of the traditional costume.

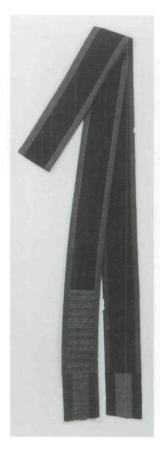


Fig. 26. Khami man's loincloth, known both as *thanipa* and *patari*. The two ends of these cloths are decorated for about 45 cm, with the same weaving technique as displayed in the Khami woman's *ah khin* (see figure 21). 411.5 x 14.6 cm.

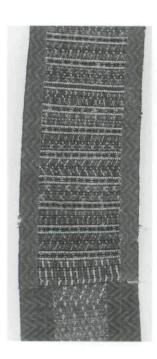


Fig. 27. Detail of Khami man's thanipa shown in figure 26.



Fig. 28. Laytu woman's beaded upper-body garment from the Lemro River area. 45 x 45 cm.

Laytu and Zantu Dress

Of the remaining "mystery" garments, three were shown to the people of all three groups, Khumi, Khami, and Mro, as well as to other tribal groups in the area. The first of these garments is a short, cropped tunic-style upper-body garment, with red glass beads and cowrie shells decorating the bottom portion and beautifully patterned supplementary weft silk adorning the top (fig. 28). Many of this type have found their way into prominent collections in the United States with only "Chin" as a description. After questioning the people named above, the unanimous conclusion was that the tunic is a woman's upper-body garment from the Laytu people.

The Laytu are a group of the southern Chin/Zo who inhabit the central and lower parts of the Lemro River valley. Along with their exquisite upper-body garment, women wear a plain, black short skirt with a belt of metal disks. During a Laytu funeral ceremony, the relatives of the deceased pile traditional costumes around his or her body to show the wealth of family. These garments are later taken back by the rightful owners. In recent years the Laytu have been



Fig. 29. Zantu woman's tunic from Myebon. Approximately 88 x 78 cm.

forcibly relocated for political reasons from their traditional mountainous river valleys on the Lemro to the western rice field areas of the Khami. Most of them found this move unbearable and have migrated back to their beloved homelands.¹⁴

The remaining two "mystery" pieces are long tunics or smocks. The first has a black or deep blue body patterned with brightly colored magenta supplementary weft and further embellished with buttons, glass beads, and sequins (figs. 29, 30). This type of garment is worn by women; it falls to around the knee and is belted at the waist with strands of glass or metal beads. The long tunic is worn by the Zantu (or Santu) who live on the lower parts of the Lemro River.15 Their area stretches from Myebon, which is southeast of Sittwe, to Minbya, east-northeast of Sittwe. Local people call the Zantu the "Sea Chin" due to their proximity to the Bay of Bengal. The second type of tunic is worn by men (figs. 31, 32). The men's garments are more somber in color than the women's. The black background is striped in beautifully woven, geometrically designed bands of varying widths, in soft warm tones of madder and tan.

Today many of the northern Chin/Zo peoples have converted to Christianity, and in the river valleys of the south some villages have adopted Buddhism, but everywhere a few older people cling to old ways. F. K. Lehman (1963b) tells of the easy blending of the young, educated Christian men and women with the old traditionalists. The tolerance of the Buddhist philosophy has room for remnants of the old ways as well. Today observances are still made for major life experiences—birth, coming of age, marriage, constructing a new house, and death. Traditional costume is still required for most of these events. A modern holiday, called Union Day, has been added to the political calendar; it is celebrated on February 12 to commemorate the short-lived achievement of the unification of Burma's diverse racial groups by U Aung San, the father of modern Burma (contemporary Myanmar). At this time, people of all backgrounds wear their finest traditional costumes with pride.

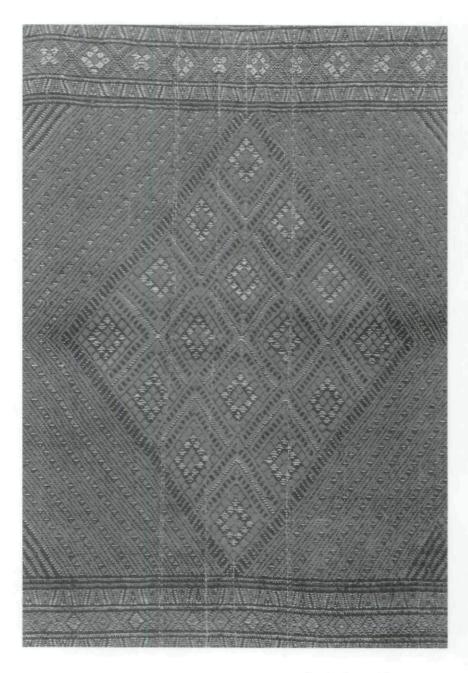


Fig. 30. Detail of Zantu woman's tunic shown in figure 29.

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All photographs were taken by the authors.

Fig. 31. Zantu man's tunic. Approximately 93 x 81 cm.





Fig. 32. Detail of Zantu man's tunic shown in figure 31.

About the Authors

Jay Bommer and Deborah Garner are husband and wife, owners of Tribal Spirit Traders, a company specializing in traditional arts of indigenous tribal peoples from around the world. For the past ten years they have been focusing their attention on building a comprehensive collection of traditional costumes from tribal groups living in Burma.

Notes

- 1. Any mistakes, translation errors, or misinterpretations of previously published material are strictly our own. We hope that this initial effort will encourage additional anthropological, linguistic, and art historical studies by scholars in these fields before all traces of the indigenous cultures are lost.
- 2. Chin is the term applied by English-speakers to linguistically related groups of Tibeto-Burmanspeakers in the western hill regions of Burma. No single term had been used indigenously to designate these groups, but some called themselves Khyang, which in modern Burmese is pronounced *Khyin*, i.e., "Chin," and this became the English label for all. (Chin is the anglicized form of High Burmese pronunciation of "Khyan" [Brauns and Loeffler 1990, p. 35]). Locally, the term Zo, a component of many of ethnic group names, is used by some of the hill peoples to encompass all the groups. The authors have elected to use an amalgamation of the two, Chin/Zo.
- 3. The identification of Khumi, Khami, and Mro presents problems; some scholars think the Khumi and Khami are the same group. Although their textiles bear similarities, the differences are sufficient to retain the ethnic distinctions. It is generally conceded that the costume of the Mro was adopted from the Khami because other Mro living in Bangladesh and India do not share these traditions. (Brauns and Loeffler 1990, pp. 36, 37).
- 4. The Laytu and Zantu, known under a variety of other names in the literature, normally live farther north in the central Chin area. Their particular garment types contrast markedly from those of their neighbors in this southern area of Burma.

- 5. Khumi population centers were confirmed by interviews with Khumi informants as well as neighboring tribal peoples. Owing to suspicions and harsh treatment by the authorities toward locals who associate with outsiders, some personal and village names are being withheld.
- 6. Daw Nan Aung, a Khumi woman originally from Paletwa, gave us the names of the garments and accessories that complete the costume. The following garments were confirmed to be Khumi by several other Mro and Khami who live in close proximity to the Khumi.
- 7. Phonetic transliterations for the spelling of tribal names of individual garments discussed in this article were provided by our English-speaking translators, U Thein Win and U Tha Kyaw Aung; they were assisted by other individuals in each village.
- 8. This loincloth style is shared by Khumi, Matu, and Haka Chin/Zo peoples. Anthropologist F. K. Lehman (1963b, p. 87) noted that the Matu people of Matupi and the Khumi of Paletwa share cultural similarities.
- 9. Among those interviewed concerning this issue were U Sar Khaung, a Mro man; U Pri Kwin, a Khumi man; and Daw Nan Aung, a Khumi woman.
- 10. St. John (1879) mentions Mro men wearing narrow blue loincloths.
- 11. Pu Lian Uk, an elected Member of Parliament of the Burmese government in exile and a former school teacher who taught for ten years in Paletwa, contributed his extensive first-hand knowledge of the region, including this information.
- 12. St. John 1879, pp. 68-70.
- 13. See St. John 1879 for more detailed information on cotton production in this region during the colonial period.
- 14. Field interviews in Mrauk Oo and Teinnyo.
- 15. Field interviews in Mrauk Oo and Sittwe; correspondence with Pu Lian Uk.

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